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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR OES/IHB - P. MURPHY AND D. WILUSZ
DEPT PLEASE PASS TO CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [AMED](#) [ELAB](#) [CASC](#) [KIPR](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: H1N1 INFLUENZA BEGINNING TO WANE

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0908 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. As of August 20, Argentina had confirmed 441 deaths due to H1N1 influenza. Official estimates indicated that more than 800,000 people had contracted the virus to date. According to Dr. Horacio Lopez, Head of Infectious Diseases at the School of Medicine and Medical Advisor to the City of Buenos Aires, health officials in Buenos Aires were reporting a steady decline in H1N1 patients in the city's hospitals. Lopez said that health officials were closely watching the pandemic's evolution since the return of schoolchildren to classes some two weeks ago, but told us he doubted there would be what he referred to as a "second wave." He added that the coming warmer weather would most certainly result in less flu cases. Still, Lopez expected that some H1N1 cases would continue to occur during the coming spring season.

¶2. Dr. Francisco Averhoff, a CDC physician and epidemiologist detailed to assist Argentina in its response, confirmed that the number of cases in Greater Buenos Aires had declined significantly. He noted, however, that new cases were still rising in the northern provinces. Averhoff agreed that the early August re-opening of schools raised the possibility of a spike in new cases, but noted that it was still too early to determine if this was taking place, given the lag in contracting and reporting the disease. He noted that the CDC was working closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) in several studies, among them a Severe Acute Respiratory Illnesses (SARI) surveillance program, and a study of the economic impact and effectiveness of the initial school closings in Argentina. He mentioned that the CDC had not observed any mutations in the H1N1 virus so far, and that H1N1 was now the dominant flu strain in Argentina.

¶3. On August 18-21, Argentina hosted the first "World Fair of Health and Municipalities" in Buenos Aires, with support from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The primary objective of the fair was to promote public health policies at the local level. At the opening ceremony on August 18, Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) publicly called again for laboratories to "suspend their economic rights to protect the health of the world." She renewed the offer from "Argentina and other countries of the region, like Brazil and Uruguay, to collaborate with the manufacturing capacity of their pharmaceutical industry to produce the vaccines under license." (Note: Our contacts tell us that Argentina does not have the very specialized capability to produce vaccines and would not be able to do so within three years, at the very least, if the government really followed through on CFK's proclamation. End Note.) Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced that it will procure 8 million doses of vaccine (for a population of 40 million) through the World Health Organization, after direct negotiations with international laboratories reportedly failed.

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